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S E C R E T CAIRO 006913

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PTER](#) [EG](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [UNSC](#) [UNGA](#)

SUBJECT: ISOLATING SYRIA AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: EGYPT
AND ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: A. STATE 159137 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. STATE 163365 (NOTAL)

Classified by ECPO Minister Counselor Michael Corbin for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) During their September 4 introductory meeting, the Ambassador and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit touched on Syria. The Ambassador sought Egyptian support to press Damascus and Lebanon to follow through with UNSCR 1559 implementation, removing all Syrian operatives from Lebanon, ending Syria's economic blockade of Lebanon, and disarming Lebanon's militias. Responding, Aboul Gheit cautioned the U.S. to "keep working on Syria: keep the pressure on, but don't break (the regime)." Should Syria collapse, he warned, the problems in the Fertile Crescent will "torment you for eternity." The Minister asked rhetorically "do you want to create a third crisis point for yourselves; with all your problems in Iraq and the ongoing process in Israel, do you really want a third point of difficulty in the Levant?" The Ambassador replied that a crisis would be avoided if Syria took the simple steps outlined by the international community.

[1](#)2. (S) During a September 6 introductory call on Arab League Secretary General Moussa, the Ambassador again raised Syria,

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per reftel demarches, and requested Moussa to press Syria to be more cooperative on Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region. Moussa called on the USG to work privately to open channels with Assad, and recognize the powerful constraining forces within in his regime. Moussa offered his assistance in mediating any such effort, suggesting that the U.S. open private discussions with Damascus on "four or five files" of critical importance with Syria's power brokers ("people of weight").

[1](#)3. (S) Poloff delivered ref A demarche September 1 to MFA Cabinet staff member Amr Sherbiny (protect), and on September 5 to Arab League Chief of Cabinet Hesham Youssef. Both welcomed the clarifications of U.S. policy, commenting that Washington was taking a "very tough" approach toward Syria at the coming UN General Assembly. Promising to share the USG message within the GOE bureaucracy, Sherbiny offered his personal assessment that seeking to undermine Assad in such a public manner in New York could be "counterproductive." Nevertheless, Egypt understood the need to maintain diplomatic pressure on the SARG over Lebanon, Iraq, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Egypt, he said, had so far refused to agree to a SARG request to hold a "bi-national committee" meeting. This committee is an approximately bi-annual exercise where the two countries seek to strengthen bilateral relations. Sherbiny said that Egypt had responded to Syria that it was "considering" hosting such an event, but that the GOE had no intention of actually doing so at the present time.

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